

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

NOTABLE RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

The French astronomer Arago (1786-1853) (1) said that Sir William Herschel had made the village of Slough so famous that its name would never perish. Slough is no longer a village, but the Herschels remain the most distinguished residents Slough has ever known. Their fame is still secure, in spite of the then unimaginable feats of present-day cosmonauts.

SIR WILLIAM HERSCHEL (1738-1822)

William Herschel was born at Hanover, and was brought up, like his brothers, as a musician. He entered the band of the Hanoverian Guards as an oboist, and visited England with his Regiment in 1756. In the following year he saw active service against the French, who had invaded Hanover, but after the battle of Hastenbeck his health gave way, and he procured his discharge from the Army. It has been stated persistently in books of reference that William Herschel deserted from the Hanoverian army, and even the Dictionary of National Biography says: 'The penalties of desertion . . . were remitted by a pardon handed to him by George III . . . in 1782'. How this idea arose is hard to imagine, as the certificate of his discharge, duly signed, could be seen in Observatory House until the house was demolished in 1963.

After his discharge from the army, Herschel made his way to England, and after two years with the Durham Militia, and a sojourn in Leeds, was appointed organist at the Octagon Chapel, Bath, in 1767. He added to his income by joining the Bath orchestra, and also took private pupils, so that his time was well occupied. Within a few years, he was joined at Bath by his brother Alexander, and his sister Caroline, who kept house for her brothers. She also sang solo soprano roles at concerts in Bath and Bristol conducted by William. The bills of *The Messiah*, in which she sang, and her brother conducted, were preserved at Observatory House.

In May, 1773, William Herschel bought a book on astronomy which fascinated him so much that, as he could not afford to buy telescopes, he tried to make them, in order to pursue his studies farther. Within eight years, in spite of the incessant musical engagements and practise involved by the necessity of earning sufficient money to keep himself and his brother and sister, William had made endless experiments, with his devoted sister's help. He discovered the planet Uranus in 1781, with an instrument of his own construction. It was the first time a planet had been discovered during the ages of recorded history, for all the five known before can be detected by the naked eye. Such a momentous discovery naturally excited widespread scientific interest, and as a direct result, William was appointed Private Astronomer to George III, with a salary of £200 a year.

In order to be near this new work, William gave up his post at Bath and, accompanied by his sister, moved first to Datchet, then to Windsor, and lastly to Slough, where he finally settled in 1786.

William's first action upon moving into Observatory House was to cut down all the trees in the garden, in order that he might have a clear view of the heavens. He set up his 20 ft. telescope on the lawn, and recommenced his observations on 5 April, 1786. He was tireless in pursuing the study of the stars and 'His sweeping operations (were) commonly pursued regardless of the temperature, from dark until dawn', (2) and 'he once worked and observed without rest during three days and nights, sleeping at the end twenty-six hours at a stretch'. (3) He also worked unceasingly at his project for a giant 40 ft. telescope, for which he received two grants of £2,000 from George III, and £200 a year for its upkeep.

Caroline Herschel, in a letter to her nephew's wife, recalls that many visitors walked through the tube before the optical part was finished 'among the rest King George III. And the Archbishop of Canterbury following the King and finding it difficult to proceed, the King turned to give him the hand, saying: "Come, my Lord Bishop, I will show you the way to Heaven". Fanny Burney (Mme. D'Arblay), (4) describing her visit to see the giant telescope, writes: 'At the invitation of Mr. Herschel, I now took a walk which will sound to you rather strange: it was through his telescope ! and it held me quite upright and without the least inconvenience; so would it have done had I been dressed in feathers and a bell hoop — such is its circumference. Mr. Smelt led the way, walking also upright; and my father (5) followed. After we were gone, the Bishop (of Worcester) and Dr. Douglas were tempted, for its oddity, to make the same promenade.'

The telescope was finished and ready for use on 28 August, 1789, and was in use until 1815, or later. The tube was 39 ft. 4 ins. and the mirror, with a diameter of 49½ inches, weighed 2,118 pounds. A scaffolding supported the tube, and a suitable arrangement of pulleys permitted the top of the tube, and the observer on his attached platform, to be raised or lowered at will. Communication by speaking-tube enabled the mechanic to adjust the telescope to suit the observations in progress.

The disused telescope was dismantled finally on New Year's Eve, 1839, when a *Requiem*, composed by Sir John Herschel, was sung by all the members of his family, assembled around the tube then lying in the garden. This section remained in the garden, and the huge mirror hung in the hall of the house, until the demolition in 1963. Numerous drawings of the telescope and its scaffolding exist, and full descriptions have been preserved. The telescope was shown for many years on the Ordnance Survey Maps as a landmark. It could be seen from the Bath Road, and many stage-coach passengers recorded their impressions of it, including Oliver Wendell Holmes in *The Poet at the Breakfast Table*.

In addition to the giant telescope, Dr. Herschel made innumerable smaller instruments, which were in great demand all over Europe. The Empress Catherine of Russia purchased many of his mirrors, and the King of Spain paid £3,150 for one of his telescopes. So great did the demand become that Herschel had to maintain a staff of mechanics to carry out the rough work, to which he gave the finishing touches, but it afforded an incentive for expensive experiments (2,160 are recorded) on polishing mirrors by machinery. Some of these instruments were constructed in the barn (destroyed in 1934) and rickyard opposite the present-day Red Cow Inn at Upton.

By the time the giant telescope was completed, Slough had become a place of pilgrimage to all the scientists of Europe. Princes, Grand Dukes, and other notabilities also came to pay their respects to the famous astronomer, and look through his telescope. The King of Poland gave him a gold medal, and all the leading academies and scientific societies of Europe showered honours upon him. He was the first President of the Royal Astronomical Society, (6) and was created a Knight of the Guelphic Order in 1816.

In spite of his meteoric rise to fame, Sir William remained a most charming and modest man to the end of his life. Mme. D'Arblay says 'Dr. Herschel is a delightful man, so unassuming with his great knowledge, so willing to dispense it to the ignorant, and so cheerful and easy in his general manners, that were he no genius it would be impossible not to remark him as a pleasing and sensible man'. The poet Campbell was captivated by his simplicity, kindness, and readiness to explain, (7) and everyone else with whom he came into contact paid tribute to this personal charm and modesty.

Sir William was the first to realise that the stars are not fixed, but in constant movement towards a certain point in the heavens, which he indicated. Seventy-five million more stars were brought into view by means of his larger telescopes, and after twenty years' laborious work, he discovered the existence of 'double-stars', i.e., stars revolving round each other 'by the bond of mutual attraction' — a proof that the law of Newton holds good universally.

Stellar photometry took its rise from Herschel's invention of the method of sequences. 'His discovery of the "infra-red" solar rays renders him illustrious as a physicist. No-one before him had suspected the unequal distribution of heat in the spectrum . . .' (8) Developments from his discovery may be said to have made possible the modern uses in photography of the infra-red camera, and its marvellous photographic effects. Professor Holden says: "As a practical astronomer he remains without an equal. In profound philosophy he had few superiors. His is one of the few names which belong to the whole world". (9)

CAROLINE HERSCHEL (1750-1848)

Caroline Herschel (10) received a personal grant of £50 a year from George III for her work as assistant to William in his astronomical studies. Until his marriage, she also acted as his housekeeper, and there is an entry in her Diary, after they had removed from Bath to Datchet, which makes curious reading in the present day. She complains that she was 'astonished at the dearness of every article . . . for at Bath I had the week before bought from 16 to 20 eggs for 6d., here I could get no more than five for 4d.'

At William's suggestion, she took up comet-hunting on her own account, and between 1786 and 1797, discovered eight comets, five of them with undisputed priority, being the first woman known to have made such discoveries, but chiefly she delighted to be her brother's constant companion and helper. She had entirely relinquished any personal ambition when she gave up her joy in singing at her brother's Bath concerts to become his assistant in astronomy, and grudged any praise of her work that seemed to detract from his distinction.

Two years after they settled in Slough, on 8 May, 1788, William Herschel married Mrs. Mary Pitt (née Baldwin), widow of John Pitt of Upton, who brought him a considerable fortune. The marriage marked a crisis in Caroline's life. Her whole life had been bound up with that of her brother for close upon 16 years, and she felt the change keenly. She removed from Observatory House, and lived in a succession of lodgings in Slough, of which the only ones known definitely are Elizabeth Cottage, on the site now occupied by No. 208, High Street (Sainsburys); Upton House, and a small house near the Crown Hotel, where she lived from 1810 to 1814.

Caroline continued to spend practically every day at the Observatory, recording William's observations, and gradually she established friendly relations with her sister-in-law, and found a new object of devotion in her nephew, John Herschel, who was born in 1792. However, in the first rush of grief over William's death in 1822, Caroline carried out a resolution to remove to Hanover, and spend the remainder of her life with her relatives there. She soon repented of her action, as her whole interest was then bound up with the studies of her nephew, John Herschel, but she was of too strong a character to go back on her word, and her self-imposed exile was at least cheered by the regard of some of the most famous people of her day. No distinguished scientist passed through Hanover without visiting her, and the English royal family, especially the Duke of Cambridge, Regent of the Kingdom of Hanover, showed her constant kindness. She was elected an honorary member of various scientific societies, and received the Astronomical Society's gold medal in 1828. She died in 1848, at the age of 97.

SIR JOHN HERSCHEL (1792-1871)

William Herschel's life-work was completed, in the most literal sense, by his son John. (11) At the age of 17, John Herschel was already described as 'a prodigy of science', and he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society at the age of 21. By the time he was twenty-six he had published in the *Memoirs of the Analytical Society of Cambridge* mathematical papers which were destined, with those of his friends Peacock and Babbage, to revolutionize the Cambridge Mathematical methods.

John Herschel was entered as a student at Lincoln's Inn on 24 January, 1814, but eventually took up scientific work, and was awarded the Copley Medal of the Royal Society in 1821; the Astronomical Society's gold medal in 1826, and many other gold medals. He won the French Lalande Prize for Astronomy in 1825. He took an active part in founding the Royal Astronomical Society, of which his father became first President. His innumerable scientific treatises won world-wide recognition, and he made many important discoveries. He carried out experiments on the brightness of stars which helped to lay the foundation for the exact definition of stellar magnitudes in force to-day, and followed up his father's studies in solar physics, by linking the formation of sunspots with the rotation of the sun, and by measuring the intensity of solar radiation. He discovered the solvent action of hyposulphite of soda on salts of silver, without which knowledge photography as a practical art would not have become available as early as 1839.

In 1829, John Herschel married Margaret Brodie Stewart, the beautiful daughter of the Rev. Dr. A. Stewart, Minister of the Canongate, Edinburgh. In 1831 he was made a knight of the Guelphic Order, and in 1833 he set sail for South Africa, with his wife and three children, and a 20 foot telescope. He spent four years in the Colony, during which time he carried on his father's survey of the heavens in the Northern Hemisphere into the Southern Hemisphere. He also initiated the excellent system of education known as the Herschel Code, which was long used by the Colony; and made many pencil drawings of scenery and flowers with the aid of a camera lucida. The flowers were exquisitely painted, with careful fidelity to nature, by his wife, and were preserved at Observatory House, where I saw them just over 100 years later, with their colouring as brilliant as when they were painted. On his visit to South Africa he was also accompanied by his carpenter-mechanic, John Stone, a Chalvey man, who worked the telescope, and gave such intelligent and devoted service that Sir John mentioned him by name in his reports — believed to be the only case on record at that date of an artisan being mentioned in such a connection.

Sir John returned to England with his wife in March, 1838, and, by this time, six children.

Although Sir John declined many of the honours showered upon him, he reluctantly accepted a baronetcy at the coronation of Queen Victoria. Having bought a property in Kent, he moved from Slough in 1840. Ten years later he became Master of the Mint, but ill health forced him to resign in 1855. He died at his home in Kent on 11 May, 1871, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, near the tomb of Sir Isaac Newton, although his family wished him to lie beside his father in Upton church, and had already given the necessary orders.

Sir John, like his father, had a great capacity for affection, and infinite natural charm and modesty. Many of his papers, books, drawings, photographs and other relics were preserved at Observatory House, including a picture of him as a small boy, which shows a lovely child face, and another as a handsome young man with large blue eyes and curly hair. The barometer he used when travelling about Europe, and when mountaineering in the Alps; a splendid porcelain dinner service sent by his brother-in-law from China; and the Dresden china sent by Caroline as a wedding present, were also preserved there.

Sir John and Lady Herschel had three sons and nine daughters. The eldest son, William James (1833-1917) succeeded his father in the baronetcy. Sir William James Herschel was one of the pioneers of the finger-print system used at Scotland Yard. (12). He introduced finger-prints for the identification of criminals in 1858, whilst in the Bengal Police.

The second son, Professor Alexander Stewart Herschel (1836-1907), a Fellow of the Royal Society, became well-known as an astronomer and physicist, and is buried in the family vault at Upton.

The third son, Col. John Herschel, R.E. (1837-1911) was a member of the Senate of Calcutta University, and Deputy Superintendent of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, 1859-1886. He was employed by the Royal Society to observe the total eclipse of the sun in 1868, and again in 1871 spectroscopically, and was among the earliest to view the coloured flames through the prism, and thus help to lay the foundation of our present vastly extended knowledge of the sun's constitution. He also observed many southern nebulae with the same instruments. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1871, and a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1872.

The last holder of the baronetcy was the Rev. Sir John Charles William Herschel, F.R.A.S. (1869-1950).

Observatory House was occupied by descendants of the Herschels until the death of Lady Herschel in November, 1957. (13) The house was demolished in 1963, in spite of the strenuous efforts of many local Societies to save it. Some of the more personal relics are in the possession of members of the Herschel family now living at Warfield, Berkshire. The Royal Observatory, the British Museum, and other museums in this country and the United States of America, each have some of the telescopes and astronomical equipment.

Sir William Herschel's fame is perpetuated by the inclusion of the sign for the planet Uranus in the Slough Borough Arms, and there is a plaque on the offices which occupy the site of Observatory House. (14) The inscription reads: 'On this site stood Observatory House, where lived the three astronomers, William Herschel (1738-1822), his sister Caroline Herschel (1750-1848) and his son John Herschel (1792-1871).'

A large symbol in the forecourt of the offices has the inscription:

'Sir William Herschel, K.G.O., (1738-1822) Discoverer of the planet Uranus 1781'

This sculpture by Franta Belsky is symbolic of the triangular structure of the forty-foot telescope through which he reached up to encompass the infinite.'

An inscription on the stone base reads:

'I have looked further into space than ever human being did before me'. W.H., 1813.'

It is proposed also to call the theatre in the new Fulcrum Leisure Centre, Planet Theatre in recognition of Sir William's association with Slough, and the achievements of man in space during the 20th century.

The 150th Anniversary of the founding of the Royal Astronomical Society was commemorated postally by the inclusion in the General Anniversaries issue of postage stamps of a 1s. 9d. stamp showing Sir William Herschel with the founder members Francis Baily and Sir John Herschel, and the giant telescope in the background. Postal history was made in Slough by a special handstamp on the First Day Covers posted in the town — the first time this was ever done in the town. The handstamp showed one of the signs for the planet Uranus, with the date of its discovery, and the words 'Sir William Herschel, First President, Royal Astronomical Society, Slough, Bucks.' Slough Post Office franked 27,708 First Day Covers posted in the special box at the head Post Office on 1 April, 1970.

The Herschel Society, named in honour of the three great astronomers, was founded in Slough by Mr. John Noyes in 1967. All the members are practical astronomers.

OTHER NOTED RESIDENTS

Apart from the successive occupiers of Upton Court and Observatory House, already mentioned, several well-known people lived in Slough during the 19th century. Although it does not seem possible to fix the exact date of their arrival here in every case, their stay is duly authenticated from various contemporary documents, with the exception of Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte. Richard Bentley says (15) that Prince Lucien lived for a time at Finefield, then a detached villa at the west end of Slough. Finefield, which was later enlarged by Mrs. Venables, stood on the site now occupied by Fineleigh Court, on the corner of Bath Road and Ledgers Road. Mr. Bentley gives no date for the residence of Prince Lucien, but if correct, it must have been at some time prior to 1848, as the Prince went to France in that year, or else after 1870, when he returned to this country. Slough rate books show Mrs. Beauchamp as the occupier of Finefield from about 1850 until the time when she was succeeded there by Mrs. Venables. Prince Lucien, who was born in Worcestershire in 1813, was a great philologist and traveller over much of England, settling in various places for a short period, during which he usually rented a house and carried out his studies locally. Consequently, although no written contemporary record of his stay in Slough appears to exist, there is nothing inherently impossible in the belief that he came here to study the local dialect.

Edward Jesse came to live in Slough some time between 1843, when Upton Park was laid out, and 1847, when his book *Favourite Haunts and Rural Studies* was published. Edward Jesse who was born in 1780, was a writer on natural history. He was descended from a branch of the Languedoc Barons de Jesse Levas, who emigrated to England after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. About 1830 he was appointed deputy surveyor of the Royal parks and palaces, and it was soon after this that he brought to perfection a plan for removing honey from bee-hives without killing the bees. He wrote many studies of natural history for Bentley's *Miscellany* and other magazines, and a number of books. He lived at Brighton from 1862 until his death in 1868.

The Wards first came to Slough in 1851. Edward Matthew Ward (1816-1879) had married Henrietta Mary Ada Ward (1833-1924) (who was no relative, in spite of their identical surnames) in 1848, when she was only 15 years of age, and he was 32. They took a furnished cottage at Slough for six months, after which they moved into 11, Upton Park. It was here Ward received a commission from the Prince Consort and the Council to paint eight historical pictures for the corridor of one of the Houses of Parliament. Queen Victoria and Prince Consort paid them many visits whilst they were living in Upton Park, and commissioned two pictures 'Napoleon the Third being Invested with the Order of the Garter' and 'The Visit of Queen Victoria to the Tomb of Napoleon the First.' Mrs. Ward, who was a gifted painter, was commissioned by Queen Victoria in 1857 to paint her youngest daughter, Princess Beatrice. Ward, who had been elected A.R.A. in 1847, was elected R.A. in 1857, and one of his models roused them at Upton in the middle of the night to tell him the news. During their seven years at Slough they never missed the Fourth of June Celebrations at Eton College, and always attended Upton Church. Their eldest son, Leslie (the cartoonist 'Spy') was born in London, and only their third daughter was born in Slough.

Ward took great interest in the foundation of the Windsor Tapestry Works (1856), under the presidency of Prince Leopold. Ward died on 15 January, 1879, and was buried in the grave of his

father Matthew Charles Ward (d. 1858) in Upton Churchyard. Many distinguished artists attended the funeral, including Sir Frederick Leighton, President of the Royal Academy.

Mrs. Ward re-visited Slough in 1917, after a lapse of 60 years, and was entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bentley at The Mere. She is buried at Upton with her husband, and their second son, Wriothesley Russell Ward (1859-1879).

Many interesting details of the life of the Wards in Slough are recorded in Mrs. E.M. Ward's *Recollections of Ninety Years*. She recalls that Bentley told her 'Other persons connected with literature are associated with Slough, such as George Smith, the publisher (founder of the *Dictionary of National Biography*), Jesse, the antiquary, three Editors in succession of the *Temple Bar Magazine*, viz., G.A. Sala, Edmund Yates and George Bentley . . .' Unfortunately, details of the residence in Slough of Sala, Jesse and Bentley alone survive, and it is possible Mr. Bentley was referring to visits paid by these distinguished literary figures to his own house.

Richard Bentley, then six years old, came to Slough with his parents George Bentley (1828-1895) and Anne (1826-1898), daughter of William Williams of Aberystwyth. He lived with them at Upton Park until he was 23. The family then removed to 'The Mere', which George Bentley built in Upton Park in 1887. George Bentley died there in 1895, and Richard continued to live there until his own death in 1936. He is buried in Upton churchyard, with his parents, near the north door of the church.

The famous firm of publishers of which Richard was the last head, was founded by his grandfather, Richard Bentley, (1794-1871) who was descended from an old Shropshire family. Bentley's published some of the works of Dickens, with Cruickshank's illustrations; novels by Disraeli, Harrison Ainsworth, Mrs. Henry Wood, Wilkie Collins, Marie Corelli, Rhoda Broughton, Maarten Maartens, and many other notable books. Richard Bentley followed his father as head of Bentley's in 1895, and also succeeded to the editorial chair of the *Temple Bar Magazine*, which had also absorbed the earlier Bentley's *Miscellany* started by the founder of the firm in 1837, with Charles Dickens as its first editor. After conducting the business for five years, Richard Bentley dissolved the firm in 1898, making over the stock and assets to Macmillan and Co.

After his retirement, Richard Bentley devoted himself largely to the study of meteorology, botany, and other sciences. He was President of the Royal Meteorological Society in 1905-06, and a Fellow of numerous learned societies. Among his own publications were the privately printed *Some Leaves from the Past* containing biographical notes of the Bentley family; *Stray Notes on Slough and Upton* (1892); and *Some Historic Inns of Slough* (1934).

George Fordham (1837-1887) the jockey, first settled in Slough at some period previous to 1879, when it is said ' . . . he went to reside at West Brighton . . .' At the close of 1884, Fordham left Brighton and returned to Slough, where he had previously lived'. (16)

Fordham, who was born at Cambridge, was a great favourite both in England and on the Continent, especially in France, where he frequently rode. He won the Grand Prix de Paris in 1867, 1868 and 1881; the French Derby in 1861 and 1868; and the French Oaks in 1880. In England his greatest successes were often in the smaller races, where his wonderful skill and determination carried him to victory against all expectations. His greatest achievement was probably the winning of the Cambridgeshire on Sabinus, but he was at the head of the list of winning jockeys from 1855 to 1863. He won the Ascot Cup five times; the Alexandra Plate once; the Gold Vase six times; the Ascot Stakes twice; the Prince of Wales Stakes four times; the Derby once; the Oaks five times, the Two Thousand Guineas twice; and the One Thousand Guineas seven times.

His probity and great kindness of heart made him respected and liked all through his career. He received souvenirs from the Prince of Wales, the Rothschilds, and other patrons of the Turf, and carried the implicit confidence of all his employers. He was especially noted for his kindness to young jockeys. He died at his home, Beaufort House, in The Grove, Slough, on 12 October, 1887, and was buried in Upton Churchyard, with the inscription on his tombstone 'It's the pace that kills'. The funeral attracted large crowds from all parts of the country, and was one of the most magnificent and memorable in the district.

Charles Hatchett (1765?-1847), who died at Belle Vue House, Chelsea, on 10 February, 1847, was buried near his parents and his wife Elizabeth in Upton churchyard, but there is room for speculation as to why the Hatchetts are buried at Upton. John Hatchett (1736-1806), father of Charles, was a coachmaker of Long Acre, London, who was born in Cranford, Middlesex, and there is no trace of any association with Upton. Hatchett built Belle Vue House in 1771, and if it is not pure coincidence, this suggests some connection with Belle Vue, Windsor Road but there is absolutely no evidence for this. (17)

Charles Hatchett was a Fellow of the Royal Society, and a member of the Literary Club originally founded by Dr. Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds, and on the death of Dr. Burney in 1814 was appointed its treasurer. Hatchett furnished the account of the club printed in Croker's edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and wrote a number of papers on chemistry.

In his will, Charles Hatchett left £100 invested in 8% Consolidated Bank Annuities on trust, to pay the Clerk of the parish of Upton-cum-Chalvey £1 annually to keep his family tomb in order. The residue of the dividends was to accumulate for seven years, and each seventh year afterwards was to be used first for any necessary repairs to the tomb, the remaining amount to be distributed to the poor of the parish. (18) Although the terms of his will were observed until at least 1890, it is now impossible even to find the tomb without reference to the Parish registers, and the whole of the income has been handed over to the Council of Social Services.

Richard Bentley says: (19) 'In a fire in the High Street in May, 1889, Elizabeth Cottage, in which Charles Dickens lodged for a time, and an adjoining building, occupied at the early part of the century by the great astronomer, Miss Herschel, were burnt down'. Elizabeth Cottage stood on the site now occupied by Sainsburys (No. 208), and since the publication of Dickens and Ellen Ternan (20) it has been suggested that the Charles Tringham who rented 'A House' in Slough (later identified as Elizabeth Cottage) from January, 1866 to July, 1867, was Dickens himself, using the name which he is said to have used in 1867 when sharing a house at Peckham with Miss Ellen Ternan. In spite of exhaustive efforts, no-one has been able to link Ellen Ternan with Dickens at Elizabeth Cottage beyond all possible doubt. (21) In view of the connection between the firm of Bentley and Charles Dickens, it seems incredible that Dickens would have taken the risk of coming to Slough incognito when George Bentley was living in Upton Park. The reference by Richard Bentley makes it more likely that Dickens lodged at Elizabeth Cottage, and his landlord was Charles Tringham — but it must be admitted, the possibility remains.

The two best-known journalists who lived in Slough were George Augustus Sala, of Upton Court, mentioned earlier, Lovat Fraser and Frank Lawrance.

Lovat Fraser (1872-1926), the publicist and journalist, was described by Bernard Falk as '... an erratic genius' (22) and '... the typical old-time journalist, full of rude life and bohemian humours'. (23) Fraser bought a house in Slough in 1903, two years before he relinquished the post of Editor of the *Times of India*, which he had held since 1898, to become leader writer for *The Times*, *The Daily Mail*, and *The Sunday Pictorial*. In 1911 he published *India Under Curzon and After*, which went into several editions, and remains one of the standard works on that era in India. He lived at the White House, Wellington Street (demolished) until his death, and is buried in the family grave in St. Mary's churchyard. (24)

Frank Lawrance came to Slough in 1923 from Harston, Cambridgeshire, to work for Mr. Francis Groves of Upton Court, who was then running his own advertising agency on the Slough Trading Estate. Mr. Lawrance began his association with the *Slough Observer* in 1924, and in 1933 went into partnership with Edmund Luff in *Slough Newspapers Ltd.* In 1947 he took over Mr. Luff's interests and carried on as sole proprietor and Managing Editor.

Mr. Lawrance took a prominent part in the life of Slough, and gave an enormous amount of his time in service to the community. He was a founder member and first secretary of the Slough Rotary Club, which received its charter in 1932, and President during the war years. He served on the Slough Council of Social Services, and held office in the Slough Chamber of Commerce, the Salt Hill Society, the Home and Southern Counties Newspaper Proprietors' Federation, and many other organizations. He was especially active in work for local hospitals, and played a great part in raising money for the Wexham Park Hospital (opened in 1965). In pre-war years he worked for the Hospital Fund, and later was on the Windsor Hospital Group Management Committee. He was President of

the St. John's Ambulance Brigade. He was also the longest serving member and trustee founder of the All Good Causes Fund, and helped to organize the first Holiday Carnival at Agar's Plough. He died on 22 July, 1969, at the age of 71. (25)

Between 1928 and 1930, Princess Blücher wrote *An English Wife in Berlin*, and edited the letters of Prince Blücher, whilst staying with Miss Mary Butt at Milford House, Windsor Road.

In addition to the theatrical associations of Baylis House, Aldin House and Brookfield, the brilliant comedian, Leslie Henson, and his first wife, Madge Saunders, lived for some years in a house in the London Road, where also Shirley Kellogg, the American actress, had a house. Among many famous stage and film folk married in the Slough Registrar's Office were Fay Compton and Leon Quartermaine, who had to escape over the garden wall to avoid the crowds gathered to see them.

The best known artists resident in Slough since the Wars are Mr. Vincent Evans, President of the Slough Art Society (see p. 127 and p. 128 Note 29); William Redworth and Frederick W. Winyard.

William Redworth (1873-1945), who was born at Gold Hill, Chalfont St. Peter, came to Slough with his parents as a child. He studied art at the Chelsea School of Art, where he met the distinguished Somerset artist, Leonard Richmond, whose sister he married in 1918. After a year in lodgings in the Dolphin Road, they settled at 59, Upton Park. He was a founder member of the Slough Art Society, which bought his painting 'The Thames at Cooper's Hill' in 1947, and presented it to the town. It now hangs in the Slough Public Library.

Mrs. Redworth (died 1971) was a founder member of the Slough Picture Collection Society, which held an exhibition of her husband's oils, watercolours and pastels in the Public Library in 1961, including numerous scenes painted in the neighbourhood. (26)

Frederick W. Winyard (1904-1971) was born in Windsor, and came to Slough as a boy. He lived with his parents in Ragstone Road, and painted scenes of local interest, including the old Crown Hotel and Black Boy Inn. In 1970 the Slough Council bought his painting 'Foster's Corner', which now hangs in the Town Hall. Mr. Winyard joined the Slough Art Society in 1960, and an exhibition of 90 of his paintings, mainly of local interest, was held at the Granada Cinema in 1971 as a memorial to him.

Mrs. Winyard still lives in the house in Baylis Road, Slough, which her husband decorated with two murals, one a scene in Canada, where he spent some years as a youth, and the other of an Italian scene. (27)

Slough can also claim associations with the artists Paul Nash (1889-1946) and his brother John Northcote Nash, who were descended from William Nash of Upton Court and Upton Lea. (See p. 148).

Alfred Blanchett (1869-1926) was a member of a well-known Slough family of musicians. He succeeded his father, W.T. Blanchett, as organist and choirmaster of St. Mary's church in 1912. He composed a number of hymn-tunes, of which the best-known is a fine setting of *Souls of Men*. (28)

A little known musical association of Slough is with the famous bass, Owen Brannigan, who was born at Annisford, near Newcastle-on-Tyne, in 1908. He lived in Baylis Road, Slough, from 1927 to 1933, whilst studying singing (29) under the late William Barrand, of the Eton College Choir, who was then living in Ragstone Road, in a house which has since been demolished. (30) During the time he lived in Slough, Mr. Brannigan sang in the choir of St. Ethelbert's Roman Catholic church. (31)

In addition to royal visits already mentioned there was an official reception of King George V and Queen Mary on 1 July, 1911, when they arrived by train after their Coronation. The Great Western Railway Company issued a particularly interesting Souvenir booklet *Royal Slough* (32) for the occasion, in which it is pointed out that Slough Station had been the gateway to Windsor and Eton for many years. It is illustrated with pictures of Slough station in 1842 and 1911; the Old Telegraph Cottage in 1845, and the Terrace at Windsor Castle in 1771. There have been numerous other 'royal occasions' in Slough since 1911, and doubtless there will be many more.

SLOUGH IN BOOKS

As has already been shown, there are numerous references to Slough in topographical books, dairies, letters and reminiscences, and especially to the old coaching inns and the Eton Montem.

The most amusing incident not already mentioned is given in the *Life of Samuel Richardson*, and is also recounted by Sir John Herschel, in his *Diary*. The Slough blacksmith was one of the few people in the village then able to read, and when Samuel Richardson's (33) novel *Pamela* was published in parts in 1740 the villagers gathered at the forge in the evenings whilst he read it aloud. They followed the adventures of the heroine with such intense interest that when her innumerable temptations were overcome, and her difficulties ended in marriage, a deputation of villagers went to the Vicar at Upton, and asked permission to ring a marriage peal for her !

In the *Diary of John Perceval*, first Earl of Egremont, under the date 10 October, 1738, there is an entry:

'Sir Orlando Bridgeman, who instead of going to his Government of Barbadoes conferred upon him last winter, made his escape (as he hoped) from the world, to avoid his creditors, by pretending to make himself away, and accordingly gave it out that he had drowned himself, was ferreted out of his hole by the reward advertised for whoever should discover him, and seized in an Inn at Slough, where he had ever since concealed himself'.

A *Short Account of the Life of Sir Joseph Banks*, (34) by Andrew Duncan says:

'... when botanizing in a ditch he was seized by police officers and carried before a magistrate as a suspicious person. But upon searching his pockets, in place of stolen watches, or other unlawful plunder, nothing was found but wild flowers ...'

A longer account given by Edward Smith in his *Life of Sir Joseph Banks* says this incident took place at Hounslow, but it has also been claimed that it occurred somewhere near Slough, during the time Banks was a scholar at Eton.

In *The Nephew of the Almighty*, an experimental account of the *Life and Aftermath of Richard Brothers, R.N.*, it says that in 1792, Brothers (35) determined to give up his prophesying, and set out 'from Hyde Park Corner along the Bath Road, carrying in his hand a rod cut from a rose-bush, meaning to go to Bristol and leave England for ever'. After walking some 16 miles on his way, he threw the rod away, and after another ten miles, he returned to London'. (36) Undoubtedly Brothers's eccentric journey provided food for local gossip, but accounts which give him any closer connection with Slough are not, apparently, correct.

Thomas Gray, in a letter to Dr. Wharton, dated 7 October, 1757, says:

'Though our party at Slough turned out so ill, I could not help being sorry that you were not with us'.

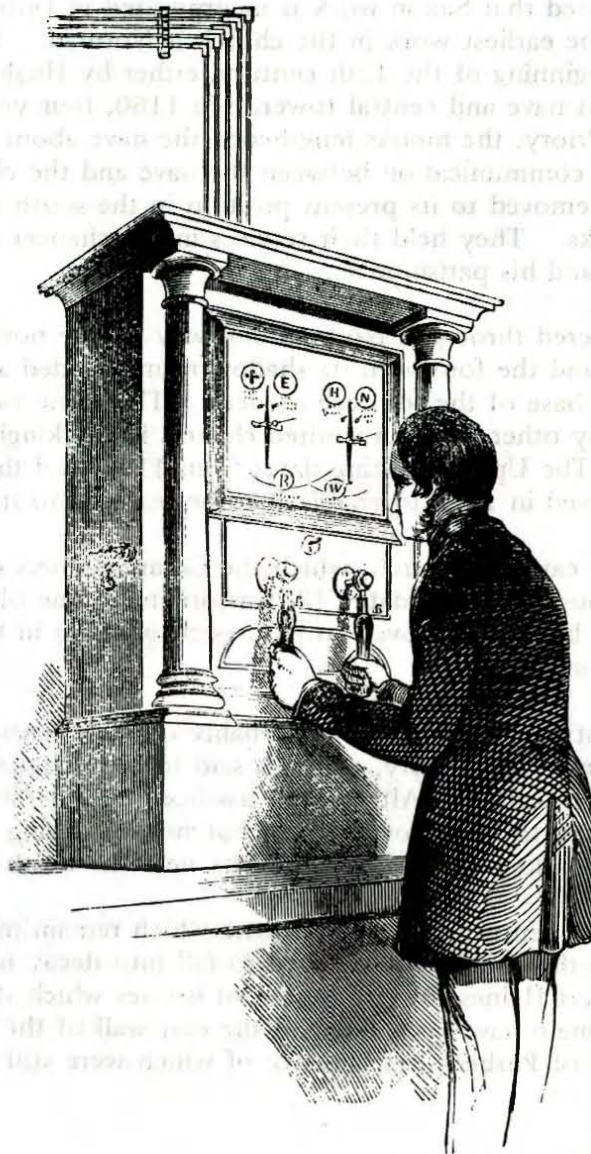
Few 20th century writers have been complimentary to Slough. One or two topographers have described Upton church. Cecil Roberts in *And So to Bath* (1940) has a fairly kindly word for the factories, and gives an account of the Herschels and a novelist's impression of a visit to Observatory House; and Niklaus Pevsner's *Buckinghamshire* finds much to admire in the factories as well as the older buildings, but the novelists who mention Slough at all, usually mention it disparagingly. Most of these novels, however — particularly the pre-1939 publications — are already forgotten. One of the exceptions is Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, published in 1932, which describes England in the distant future, when everything, even birth, is done synthetically. He depicts Slough as a vast crematorium (37) for everyone, where bodies are changed into phosphorus so that people will be useful even when dead. (38)

Sir John Betjeman was even less complimentary when he wrote the all too frequently quoted 'Come friendly bombs and rain on Slough'. (39) It is obvious he had no real knowledge of Slough, which at the time he wrote still had most of its old coaching inns, and buildings of the Victorian period he admires so much. When he visited St. Mary's Church, Slough, towards the end of the 1960's he was particularly impressed by the west window. He has since explained that he was only 19 years of age when he wrote his derogatory poem on Slough. (40)

NOTES

1. Dom François Arago. Bentley, Notes, p. 13 quotes his statement as: 'C'est le lieu du monde où il a été fait le plus de découvertes. Le nom de ce village ne périra pas. Les sciences le transmettront religieusement à nos derniers neveux'. Alfred Rimmer in *Rambles Round Eton and Harrow*, (1898) p. 9, renders it: 'Le nom de ce village ne périra pas; les sciences le transmettront religieusement à la postérité la plus reculée.'
2. D.N.B.
3. *ibid.*
4. Fanny Burney (Mme. D'Arblay, 1752-1840).
5. Dr. Charles Burney (1726-1814).
6. Royal Astronomical Society, incorporated 1820; Chartered 1831.
7. *The Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell* by W. Beattie (1849) Vol. 2 234 ff.
8. D.N.B.
9. *ibid.*
10. A misprint in *The Herschel Chronicle*, p. 170, gives Caroline's height as 4 ft. 3 ins. which has been quoted frequently to show she was little more than a dwarf, but her height was actually 5 ft. 3 ins., short, but not dwarfish.
11. William Herschel, by Angus Armitage (1962) p. 39.
12. The value of finger-prints in proving identity had been known to the Chinese about 200 B.C., and the present system grew from the work of Professor Purkenje of Breslau in 1823; Herschel in 1858, Galton in 1890 and Sir Edward Henry.
13. Details about the Herschels are chiefly from information given to me personally in 1938 by the Rev. Sir John C.W. Herschel, and Miss Myra Hardcastle, great grand-daughter of Sir William Herschel, who showed me the treasures of Observatory House. Some details are taken from *The Herschel Chronicle*, edited by Sir William Herschel's grand-daughter, Constance A. Lubbock (1933). Other sources are acknowledged in the text.
14. Now No. 5, Windsor Road.
15. Bentley, Inns, p. 17.
16. D.N.B.
17. Letter to me from Mrs. Anita Hatchett, 5 March, 1966.
18. Phipps, p. 75-76 'Charities'.
19. Bentley, Notes, p. 41.
20. *Dickens and Ellen Ternan* by Ada Nisbet (University of California Press, 1952).
21. Felix Aylmer, *Dickens Incognito*, 1969 and second, corrected, edition. It is especially important to read the corrected version.
22. Bernard Falk, *He Laughed in Fleet Street* (2nd Edition, 1937), p. 235.
23. *ibid.* p. 236.
24. Personal knowledge. Lovat Fraser was my father's only brother.
25. Personal knowledge, and obituaries in the *Slough Observer*, 25 July and 8 August, 1969; and *Slough Evening Mail*, 23 July, 1969.
26. Personal knowledge; Catalogue of the Slough Picture Collection Society's Exhibition of William Redworth's Works (in my possession), and information from Mrs. David Griffith, of the Slough Picture Collection Society.
27. I am indebted to Miss Gladys E. Totman, Hon. Secretary of the Slough Art Society, and to Mrs. Winyard, for this information.
28. Personal knowledge.
29. I have to thank Mr. Steve Race for this information.
30. I am indebted to Miss Kathleen Naylor for this information.
31. Major Michael Lee first drew my attention to this, and it was afterwards confirmed by Mr. Brannigan.
32. I have a copy of this Souvenir in my possession.
33. Samuel Richardson (1689-1761).
34. Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820), President of the Royal Society.
35. Richard Brothers (1757-1824).
36. This incident is also recounted in the D.N.B.
37. Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, p. 60.
38. *ibid.*, p. 61.
39. Sir John Betjeman, *Collected Poems: 'Slough'* (Continual Dew, 1937).

40. Mrs. Marion Scarr tells me Sir John Betjeman appeared on a T.V. programme early in 1973, in which he said the poem on Slough was written when he was only 19 years of age and living in Gerrards Cross. It may perhaps be said in extenuation that about the time he wrote the poem there had been many disparaging comments on the 'Slough Dump' in the newspapers.



46. The Great Western Railway Electric Telegraph Instrument